

## 'STUPIDITY' BLAMED FOR TIEUP IN FRANCE

Hatt in 'Railway Age Gazette' Discusses Humbert's Attacks.

### WASTE IN TRANSPORTING

Water S. Hatt in the *Railway Age Gazette* discusses the articles under the title "The Scandal of Transportation," in which Charles Humbert, editor of *Le Journal*, Paris, criticizes the present condition of the railways and water lines of France. Mr. Hatt blames official delay for the congestion of freight in France. Mr. Hatt says:

"Senator Humbert has tried in every way to urge upon his country the fact that success in war results rather from general organization than from heroism in the field. He has emphasized that the government machinery is cumbersome even under conditions of peace and has not been afraid to point out that the governmental organization is a hindrance to efficiency and that the government is not capable of doing what must be done, but whose hands are tied by the red tape of inefficient governmental organizations."

Mr. Hatt points out that the government is not clearly set forth in its campaign to improve the railway and transportation facilities during the terrible and costly months of this war.

In an article entitled "The Fear of Responsibility," he writes: "It is all of our public organizations, by some special which paralyzes devotion and good will and sterilizes the most fruitful efforts in the field. My long experience in administrative, political and governmental affairs leads me to answer:

"France is dying because of a mortal fear of responsibility. Everybody is trying to protect himself. The employee protects himself against his chief. The chief protects himself against the opposition of his employees. The two ally themselves to protect the status quo, which they believe. The departments take on special advisers. The Ministers, generally ignorant, hesitate between the conclusions of their own staff and those of the directors."

"When a question is to be decided each asks to whom it shall be referred. Stupidly it is referred to a committee. Oh, no! That would be too dangerous. So each device means to discover whom to consult, and when this person is found the matter is referred to him. But he too knows the game, and he too takes care to 'play safe.' There is thus a ridiculous tennis game between the bureaus. The game is to know how to send back the ball, so much the worse for him who lets the frightful obligation of taking a decision fall on his side."

"This game, known in Washington as that of 'bussing the buck,' would seem to have been applied to the transportation situation through the work of the committee of the Department of Public Works, which in France directs the operations of the railways, the canal boat system and the docks at the seaports."

"After the investigation had been under way for two months *Le Journal* had published articles showing that the State railways were buying locomotives and cars abroad, whereas 2,000 Belgian locomotives and many thousand freight cars were standing unused; that 2,000 canal boats, fully manned, representing a tonnage of 60,000 cars, were idle; that the price of freight and of products on the markets was soaring; and that the war munition factories were unable to secure raw material or to deliver their products."

"It then published an article denouncing the stupidity of the public officials who had not been able to clear up the situation. Some of the newspaper attacks were directed against the State railways."

"The article stated in part: 'Let us be just and modest. We have obtained a great improvement in words but have obtained an aggravation of the situation. In fact, the railways were named. The investigation was started, but the railway stations were closed, the freight rates increased and production diminished. We denounced the scandalous situation, but the result was that the public from Wednesday to Monday morning. The largest port in France opening on the Atlantic to the two Americas has therefore been without communication with the interior of the country for five days. The docks are somewhat cleared, but the packages of the gate rather than inside."

"Since the beginning of the war, France has purchased and imported for its army some 150,000 automobiles, many of these heavy trucks. The roads of France in the army zone are fairly lined with them, dozens after dozens of trains of them running out from Paris or meeting the railroad trains at any given point and then picking up freight. Has there been any method in this method of transport? *Le Journal* discovered and in one place that, having been in need of repairs, were shoved into an uncovered yard and left to rust and ruin. The soldiers guarding them were occupied in raising chickens, sheep and pigs."

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## FALL RIVER LINE TO BOSTON

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